

# IMPERIALISTS OR REPUBLICANS?

ADDRESS BEFORE THE ESSEX INSTITUTE,

Salem, Mass., January 9, 1899

By HON. GEORGE S. BOUTWELL



PUBLISHED BY THE  
ANTI-IMPERIALISTIC LEAGUE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.



ROCKWELL AND CHURCHILL PRESS,  
BOSTON, MASS.

# IMPERIALISTS OR REPUBLICANS?

---

**Mr. Boutwell's Speech before the Essex Institute, Salem,  
January 9, 1899.**

---

I shall devote the larger part of the time assigned to me to the discussion of two topics that sustain an important relation to the movement by which this government is to be so changed and transformed that its republican character will be subordinated to an aggressive foreign policy, to be followed by burdensome taxation at home and the sacrifice in war of successive generations of the youth of the country.

First of all I am to seek for the line of delimitation between a republic and an empire, and in proportion to the degree of success that may be attained will be our means of deciding whether we are Imperialist or Republicans.

In the second place, even though I compel myself to stand at the confessional, I shall not hesitate to pass in review the steps and processes by which this republic is being transformed into an empire.

Words are of no considerable value, but Senator Lodge objects to the word "Imperialist" as applied to him and to those who support the policy that he approves. It is alleged also that a Senator who stands high in the opinion of the President and in the councils of the Republican party has said that he is ignorant of the meaning of the words "imperialist" and "imperialism," and he declares that he will not become a lexicographer and give his time to the inquiry involved in so laborious an undertaking. His abstention is a mark of wisdom. The inquiry might convince himself, even, that he is an Imperialist, and that he is lending himself to the work of transforming this republic into an empire. I am not concerned about words, nor am I anxious to find words and phrases that may be applicable to individuals or to classes of men. Let us seek for facts on which conclusions may be based.

It may not be an impossible undertaking to mark the distinction between a republic and an empire, and thus

from our opinions and policy we may decide whether we are Republicans or Imperialists. That is the object of this my first inquiry.

Mr. Lincoln expressed in choice language and in phrase immortal the democratic-republicanism of the American republic when he said at Gettysburg, in honor of the dead who had fallen there, "We here highly resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain, that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom, and that the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

The new birth of freedom came with the proclamation of emancipation and the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution. Is its life to be ended with the first third of the first century of its existence? That is a very important question, and the answer must soon be made by the American people.

When I spoke before the Twentieth Century Club, the eighth day of October last, I considered an alternative proposition as to the government of the islands that we are acquiring. The alternative was this: Are the territories and peoples that we have acquired and are acquiring to be treated as prospective States or as perpetual colonies?

That alternative has disappeared and a new aspect of the case is presented. It is not only understood, it has been announced in substance by the President at Atlanta, that, with the possible exception of Hawaii, the islands claimed and demanded are not destined to statehood in the American Union.

#### PORTO RICO.

Porto Rico, which contains a population of a million, whose homes are on a territory about equal in area to the five western counties of Massachusetts, is to be held in some subordinate condition, without the consent of the inhabitants of the island having been first obtained, and without any pledges on our part as to the nature and duration of the government we are to establish over them.

As to Cuba and the Philippines, we are to set up and maintain such military governments as please us, and these governments are to remain until the governing party is of opinion that the parties governed are capable of governing themselves.

Do we not find in this policy the essential quality of every despotism that has ever existed? And was there

ever a despot who did not plead in excuse and justification of his usurpation the incompetency and incapacity of those over whom he exercised power? "He serves them for their good." That is his plea, and that is to be our plea. It is the plea of the President in his proclamation to the Philippines in these opening days of the new year. It is a plea which will justify the acquisition of territory and the subjugation of peoples half the globe over.

But a further answer is tendered: These governments, say the advocates of the new policy, are to be temporary governments. All things are temporary that are measured by time, but why temporary if good, and if good why not to be permanent? To whatever length of time temporary governments may be maintained, the ability of the people resident to establish a government for themselves can never be made certain until the experiment has been tried. Why not submit to the experiment at once? The war was undertaken for the freedom of Cuba and upon the allegation that the Cubans could govern themselves. Spain has been driven from Cuba. If the reason for the war was adequate the reason remains; and by force of that reason we are required to allow the inhabitants of Cuba to set up a government for themselves, and that without delay. This duty the President realizes.

The nature of a government is to be found in its origin and not in the character or quality of its administration. There may be mildness, there may be leniency in the administration of a despotic government, but the existence of despotic governments cannot therefore and thereon be justified. We must look to the foundation, and no one can complain that we now apply Mr. Lincoln's test of republican government to the case in hand.

By our authority, and without asking the inhabitants of Porto Rico and the Philippines, we are to set up governments over them, make laws for which we demand uncomplaining submission, and we are to appoint officers who are to follow our guidance, and that without regard to the opinions of the people over whom those officers may bear rule. Can this conduct endure the test of the great political aphorism laid down by Mr. Lincoln on the battlefield of Gettysburg?

Or, if I am not too old-fashioned for the present age, I venture to ask the advocates of the modern system of expansion of territory and the government of foreign peoples without their consent if they can cite an act in

Washington's career, or quote a passage in his writings, which gives support to the present policy?

If republicanism in government is to be deduced from our history as a republic the result, the conclusion, must be this, as to the acquisition of occupied territory:

1. The people acquired must have consented freely thereto, or the lawful authorities who were over such people must have consented freely to the transfer.

2. The acceptance of the transfer of territory and population must be upon the understanding and pledge on the part of the United States that the territories and inhabitants so acquired are to become members of the American Union upon the basis of equality of citizenship in the several States and of the equality of States in the Union.

These facts and conditions do not exist in the proceedings touching Porto Rico and the Philippines. One conclusion, therefore, is unavoidable; namely, the proceedings in regard to those islands are not in harmony with American-republican ideas and institutions.

A further inquiry may be this: Do the proceedings correspond to the policy and history of Great Britain? And next, Is England an empire, or is the title "Empress of India," that was bestowed upon Queen Victoria by Lord Beaconsfield, a fabrication? And how has the empire of Britain been created? Assuredly by conquest, as in the Canadas and India, and by the seizure and appropriation of defenceless territories, as in parts of Africa.

One law or rule of creation may be found in all the empires that have existed, from Phœnicia and Carthage to Rome and England. In every empire there may be found a nucleus where power has resided, and around that central force dependent and subordinate territories and provinces have been gathered. It is in this relation that Porto Rico and the Philippines are to stand with reference to the United States, if the policy of the administration shall be consummated and made the policy of the country.

The city of Rome was the nucleus of the Roman empire, as England is the nucleus of the empire of Britain, and as the United States is to be the nucleus of the empire of America.

If Mr. Joseph Chamberlain can bear with composure the statement that he is an imperialist our fellow-citizens who are introducing the colonial policy of Great Britain as the policy of the United States ought not to



be disturbed when they are assigned to equal rank with Great Britain's Secretary for Colonial Affairs.

In this connection I put two questions to the upholders of the expansion policy of the administration, and in set-off I will submit an answer in my own behalf to a question that the President has put to the Anti-Imperialists of the country. My questions are these: Will you present a statement of your policy, as you understand it, and justify it as an American policy? And secondly, Will you show wherein it differs from the colonial policy of Great Britain?

The question that I am to answer is this: What measure can the Anti-Imperialists offer as a substitute for the seizure, possession, and occupation of the Philippine islands, as that work is now going on under the lead of the President? My answer may be found in a single sentence.

Recognize the pledges that were made in April last by Congress and by the President, and retire from Porto Rico and the Philippines in obedience to those pledges. From the President's question, but more distinctly from his general policy, we are to infer that what has been done is to be accepted and justified, and that the abandonment of the Philippines is not to be considered. By the roughest proceeding known to diplomacy in modern times we have secured the cession of the Philippines to ourselves, and all in disregard of the millions whose homes are in the islands. If the country is prepared to sanction this proceeding it is already prepared to carry on a war for the suppression of any attempt at self-government that may be made by the native inhabitants.

It is claimed that events have obliterated the pledges of April and that they are no longer of binding force. What are those events? We have seized a harbor and a city in the Philippines, and it is alleged that Spain has kept open the question of the sovereignty of the islands. When the fleet of Cervera had been destroyed, when the city of Santiago had capitulated, when Spain had abandoned the sovereignty of Cuba, everything relating to jurisdiction for which the war was undertaken had been accomplished.

The arrangement of August 12, 1898, should have been an actual peace — it should have been a comprehensive peace. Having secured the independence of Cuba, our duty as a nation, according to our own theory of duty, had been performed fully. Spain had neither the disposition nor the capacity for further hostilities.

If when the protocol was signed the question of the disposal of the Philippines had been eliminated, then war, and all the apprehensions of war, would have disappeared at once. The war expenses would have been reduced rapidly, and, above all, the hundred thousand young men who are now engaged in guard and police duties in regions where death is the frequent visitor of every regiment would have been restored to their homes, and the dire apprehensions, that are only less disturbing than death itself, which now assail the happiness of thousands of families would not have been the nation's return for patriotic services and patriotic sacrifices. If the President had been disposed in August last to receive what we had demanded, and what in April we had agreed to receive, our authorities would have signed a treaty instead of a protocol, and in the place of an armistice we should have had an accomplished and established peace.

Whatever of suffering and loss of life there may have been at Manila since the protocol of August 12 was made known to Admiral Dewey, whatever expenditures may have been incurred for the support of the army in the east, all, all are the consequences of a purpose on the part of the President to gain control of the Philippine islands. A war that was begun for humanity, as we alleged, has been continued for conquest. The responsibility for the war since the 12th of August is upon the administration and not upon Admiral Dewey. An order from the President would have ended the siege of Manila. That the order was not issued places the responsibility upon the President.

The resolution of Congress of April 19 was a limitation of the powers of the President. The war was declared for a specific purpose—the freedom of Cuba from the rule of Spain. When the protocol was signed that object had been accomplished; and at that moment all military operations not required for the protection of Cuba should have come to an end. The President's question is answered when I say: Redeem the promises you made in April last. Allow the inhabitants of Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines to enter at once upon the work of self-government.

The question is put: Are we to be deprived of the results of our victories? My answer is this: We have not conquered the Philippines. Less than three per cent. of the inhabitants are under our jurisdiction even nominally. Spain has surrendered its sovereignty, but we are in the presence of an army of occupation that we are to



conciliate or to subdue. For one I say: Bring these sacrifices to an end. Spurn the congratulations of Great Britain, and redeem the pledges given in April last. Thus and only thus can we command peace and maintain our honor.

I pass on to an examination of the protocol of August 12. That protocol contains this provision: "The United States will occupy and hold the city, bay, and harbor of Manila pending the conclusion of a treaty of peace which shall determine the control, disposition, and government of the Philippines." Under this stipulation the pretension of Spain that the taking of the city of Manila on Saturday, August 13, was a violation of the protocol is a groundless pretension. Spain surrendered its jurisdiction over the city pending the formation of a treaty of peace, and the time and manner of entering into possession became the right of the United States.

On another point our claim cannot be maintained either upon moral grounds or upon a fair construction of the language of the protocol.

If in August last the President intended to demand the surrender of the sovereignty of the Philippines the language of the protocol in regard to those islands should have corresponded to the language used in reference to Cuba, or it should have contained a specific declaration of purpose. As to Cuba, the stipulation is in these words: "Spain will relinquish all claims of sovereignty over and title to Cuba." The United States has not only demanded the relinquishment of "all claims of sovereignty over and title to the Philippines," but the cession of the islands has been demanded also. That demand has been acceded to by Spain. Under this claim Cuba and the Philippines are placed upon the same basis as far as the rights of Spain are concerned. Why was not the demand made in August last for the relinquishment of the sovereignty over and title to the Philippines if at that time such was the purpose of the President? And if such was then his purpose why did not the protocol in regard to the Philippines follow the protocol in regard to Cuba? Further, upon what moral grounds can the indefinite and multifaced paragraph in regard to the Philippines be now so construed as to become the equivalent of the explicit provision in regard to Cuba? Or has there been a change of opinion in the President since August last and, consequently, a change of policy? And if such changes have taken place can they be defended upon moral grounds, or upon those plain principles of

justice which ought to characterize the proceedings of governments as well as the conduct of individual men? The protocol does not furnish any ground for a demand of the sovereignty of the Philippines for any purpose or for any period of time, and its language is an admission that we did not then claim title by conquest. It is further clear, and should be admitted by us, that we gained nothing by the events of the 13th of August.

We entered the city of Manila under the protocol which gave us that right, and as an armistice existed on the thirteenth we could take nothing by a warlike movement, even though the military authorities at Manila were ignorant of the arrangements by which hostilities were suspended.

If, as matter of fact, and in the opinion of the President, the Philippines had been conquered on the 12th of August, why was not a demand then made for the surrender of jurisdiction? The armistice was operative on the 13th of August, and the military movements of that day wrought no change in our relations to Spain. The provisions in the treaty of peace by which Spain surrenders the sovereignty of the Philippines found its place there in obedience to a new rule of international law — “that a treaty of peace can contain nothing except what the victors choose to put in,” and conversely, that a treaty of peace must contain whatever the victors choose to put in.

On the basis of this public policy we might have demanded and secured the cession of the Balearic isles in the Mediterranean sea, or even the cession of the peninsula of Spain.

We may yet be led to say with a retired governor-general of India, and without the aid of a profane expletive, that we “stand astonished at our own moderation.”

I come now to the consideration of my second topic, the steps and processes by which this republic is being transformed into an empire. In this inquiry I shall deal with events to which I have referred already.

As long ago as during the administration of President Fillmore the jurisdiction of the Sandwich islands was tendered to the United States. The offer was declined. The weakness of the monarchy and the grasping policy of England gave rise to rumors and to apprehensions that that government might take or accept a jurisdiction which we had refused. The events of the Civil war had renewed and intensified the ancient hostility of the people of the United States toward Great Britain. Our

recent conversion to the policy of the mother country was not anticipated in the administrations of Mr. Lincoln and General Grant. Out of the events and conditions concerning Hawaii there came into view, and with some apparent strength, a tendency to favor a policy of annexation to the United States.

The administration of General Grant entered upon a policy to which I gave my support both in the Cabinet and in the Senate, and which promised two important political results, namely; the extinguishment of any purpose that England might have in regard to the future of the islands and the suppression of any purpose that might exist to secure their annexation to the United States.

The fourth article of the treaty of 1875 with Hawaii contains a stipulation that as long as the treaty shall remain in force the authorities of the islands will not "dispose of or create any liens upon any port, harbor, or other territory — or grant any special privileges or right of use therein, to any other power, State or government, nor make any treaty by which any other nation shall obtain the same privileges relative to the admission of any articles free of duty."

By the treaty of 1887, and under the lead of Senator Edmunds, we acquired Pearl-river harbor, the most valuable harbor in the islands.

It was thus, and for the twofold purpose of guarding the islands against England and checking the tendency to annexation in the United States, that we made our first lodgement in the tropical parts of the Pacific ocean.

In the year 1890 we entered into a tripartite agreement with England and Germany for the management rather than for the government of the Samoan islands.

We have incurred expenditures in the undertaking, we have sustained losses, and we have failed to satisfy the contending rival chieftains. Of gains and advantages there has been no exhibit. When General Gresham was at the head of the Department of State he had a purpose to annul the arrangement, but he hesitated to try the experiment of changing the policy of his predecessors. When an administration has taken territory or acquired power a successor will never surrender territory nor relinquish power except under the force of a public opinion so expressed that it must be accepted as a command. So it will happen that any jurisdiction which we may take over the Philippine islands, however

we may qualify it, will be continued — continued probably until it is wrested from us by force.

Then came the usurpation in Hawaii, carried on by persons of foreign birth or the immediate descendants of foreigners, aided by the presence of an American war-vessel. The haste with which President Harrison recognized the new government, and the brief time that he allowed himself before he entered upon the policy of annexation, justify the conjecture that he was pre-advised of the proceedings.

The annexation of the islands seems to have been a preliminary step to the seizure of the Philippines.

It is a fact of common observation, and a fact which those who are of the profession of the law have occasion to observe frequently, that when a man has done a wrong act, or violated a law, he is ready without delay to perpetrate another wrong, or to commit another crime, either for a defence or for an explanation of what he has already done.

Our experience in Hawaii, Cuba, and the Philippines is in accord with this general law of human conduct.

We have erred and we are erring in taking into our jurisdiction bodies of men who have no knowledge of our institutions, or of the principles and ideas on which our institutions are supposed to rest.

Consider the 110,000 inhabitants in Hawaii. Is there an advocate of annexation, from the President along the entire line, — is there one man who will advocate what we call universal suffrage for the semi-barbarians whom we have taken into fellowship? What follows? The answer is in the report of the commission.

First of all, the commissioners recommend the exclusion from citizenship of more than four-tenths of the resident inhabitants on account of race, thus setting aside the fourteenth and fifteen amendments to the Constitution. It will appear that these excluded persons are already citizens of the United States, and they will so remain in defiance of the commissioners and of Congress. Mr. Wheaton cites as cases of "collective naturalization" the inhabitants of the territories acquired of France, Spain, and Mexico, and also the inhabitants of Texas, who were made citizens of the United States by the joint resolution of Congress of March 3, 1845. His opinion was followed by the international tribunal organized under the treaty of 1880 with France. [See the case of *Egle Aubrey*.]



Citizens may be made by act of Congress, but citizenship cannot be destroyed by act of Congress, either for self-protection or as a penalty upon a race.

By the report of the commission the right to vote is not only limited to citizenship, but within the limits of citizenship the right to vote and the right to a seat in the House and the Senate are made dependent upon the possession of a sum of money.

Since Dr. Franklin's illustrative example by which he shows that under a property qualification the right of voting might be in a mule rather than in the man who owned the mule, that offensive relic of a former age has been scourged out of the States, where it had made a lodgement under the influence of England's political system, towards which the Imperialistic party of America is now tending with an appreciable movement that is accelerated constantly.

Mark the steps by which we have gained our first position as an empire.

In the administration of President Harrison we contributed to the overthrow of a government which we had recognized as a legitimate government, and whose friendship for us had never been clouded by any act of injustice.

We first encouraged and then recognized as a lawful organization a body of men, hardly more than a twentieth of the population, who had seized the islands and subjected the great majority to their domination.

With hot haste the President presented a treaty of annexation to the Senate. The undertaking failed. President McKinley renewed the treaty. Again the undertaking failed. Finally the administration secured the annexation of the islands by a joint resolution, a mode of action that was condemned in the case of Texas by a large body of citizens who afterwards became the Republican party.

Next, the commission has misnamed the proposed government. It is called a territorial government, but whatever may be the name under which it may be organized it has all the ear-marks and qualities of a disciplined oligarchy.

The plan of the commission has no precedent in our history; it has no example on this side of the Atlantic. It stands alone, and it is conspicuous as a wide departure from American principles and practice. Forty-eight thousand of the resident inhabitants are excluded on ac-

count of race, and without any inquiry as to character or attainments. Of the sixty thousand remaining, others may be excluded for illiteracy; and finally, no one can vote for a member of the Senate, nor can any one sit in the House or Senate, who does not enjoy an annual income, or possess a very considerable property. Thus, as an example of American policy, politics, and justice, we are to set up a little oligarchy founded on money. Neither Franklin nor Lincoln, in their early days of struggling poverty, could have met the requirements now demanded for full citizenship in Hawaii.

Washington's example and teachings have vanished, — vanished for a time only; they will reappear, — and the example and teachings of Mr. Lincoln are disregarded utterly.

I may disturb the serenity of Imperialists, but I am to indulge myself in reading again Mr. Lincoln's formula of American liberty, that Imperialists and Anti-Imperialists may have, in one view, the means of testing the proceedings in Hawaii, which are to be reproduced on a larger scale in Porto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines, if the attempt to acquire the Philippines shall be ratified by the Senate.

Said Mr. Lincoln: "We here highly resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain, that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom, and that the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

The task to which I invite the Imperialists is this: Reconcile your scheme for the government of Hawaii with the principles enunciated by Mr. Lincoln, or, if to you the task should seem to be an easier task, then demonstrate the unsoundness of the principles laid down by him.

I return to the proposition that the doer of a wrong act will continue in wrongdoing for the purpose of explaining or defending what he has already done. Such, indeed, is the necessity of his situation.

We erred in the aid we gave to the small body of revolutionists in Hawaii, who, by our aid, were enabled to overthrow a friendly and long-existing government. They set up an oligarchy; we recognized it; we took from its hands the sovereignty they had acquired; we became their allies; and the proposed government is calculated to continue that oligarchy in power. We engaged originally in an unjust enterprise, and every step in the



subsequent proceedings has been marked by injustice, all to be consummated by the establishment of a government which some will tolerate, but which no one can defend on principle or extenuate on the ground of necessity.

Thus and by such means we laid the beginnings of our empire in the tropical waters of the Pacific ocean.

